critical digest

505 FIFTH AVENUE. N. Y. 17. N. Y.
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New York Theatre Diary

Carousel- City Center 6/2/54. Third production of the NYC Light Opera Co.With Jo Sullivan, Chris Robinson, Winifred Heidt, John Conte. Directed by William Hammerstein...The Homeward Look- Theatre de Lys- 6/3/54. John Carabedian and Philip Meister present a new comedy by Effie Young & Ernest Pagano. With Vicki Cummings, Roddy McDowall, Pat Malone, Anne Meara. Directed by Mark Gordon.

Current Theatre Reviews

Fledermaus- City Center 5/19/54.Mixed notices were filed on the second limited run production of the NYC Light Opera Co. featuring Jack Russell, John Tyers, Gloria Lind. Most agreed that Strauss music is as fine as it is familiar. But several could not find many kind words for the new book written by Thomas and Ruth Martin. 3 critics filed cons. Atkinson,Times, okayed singers and music, but felt book needed Bobby Clark to enliven it. Everything is alright until the characters stop singing, comments Kerr,Herald Tribune. And then,the critic adds, you're in for it. McClain, Journal American, thinks the production misses because it lacks authority. On the pro side, Coleman,Mirror, marks the show as a lark carried off with infectious high spirits. Pleasant,occasionally stylish version of one of the most tuneful shows in the operetta field,rates Chapman,News. Critic would like to see James Barton some day in the role of the comic jailer. Current keeper is Colee Worth. A most respectable offering, recommends Hawkins, World Telegram & Sun. Admitting himself a Gilbert & Sullivan man, Watts,Post, okayed Strauss' piece as being adequately done.

Hits Revisited

Wonderful Town, rates Atkinson,Times, is still the gayest musical comedy on Broadway. One of the other tries have been half so integrated and funny. Though the critic noted a bit of the wacky blonde from her previous show, he otherwise found Carol Channing's performance okay in the role vacated by Rosalind Russell. Except for a most harrowing overture, the entire evening is a delight.

Way Off Broadway

Margo Jones' Theatre '54 in Dallas is surely one of the country's tiniest theatres,reports Beaufort,Christian Science Monitor, But the 198 seat house is big in significance and accomplishment. Miss Jones has built in 8 seasons a successful professional community theatre built on a repertory of new plays and classic revivals...Washington,D.C. most edifying show is Robinson Jeffers' The Cretan Woman at Arena Stage, comments Atkinson,Times.. Although the script is stormy,the characters are franker,the form more compact,the moral issues clearer and the language less monotonous than in the Army-McCarthy carnival. The production on the whole is admirable , the acting as a whole most satisfactory. Production at start of Zelda Fichandler's fourth continuous season has enterprise and taste.

Pardon "CD" Chart

"CD" Playgoer's Guide is in the process of changing format. Thus for a few weeks the same set of figures may be used. After that it will return to its usual function of being up-to-the minute . Thank you for your patience.

Off Broadway

"The Ensemble", a new group planned by Lee Kerz and Joseph Kramm which plans to establish a permanent repertory theatre in NY this fall, has received a pledge of support from "Chapter One", the Greater NY Chapter of AMTA. A company of 30 will present a new production every five weeks, adding it to their regular repertory.

Born Yesterday is being performed week-ends at Hudson Guild Theatre, 436 W 27...American Theatre Wing's revue On the Wing will be presented to an invited audience at ANTA Playhouse at 3 PM...The New Dramatists Committee presents Ceremony of Innocence May 25-26 at ANTA Play house, directed by Morris Carnovsky... Invitation Theatre opens its program at Amato Opera Theatre with Superstition by James Nelson Barker...Broadway Chapel Players final production of Fry's The Boy With a Cart will be presented May 30 at 5 30 PM at Broadway Tabernacle Church... Chamber Opera Players present Gilbert & Sullivan's Utopia, Ltd at Gluck Theatre, 244 E 52 June 5...Hamlet closes at Jan Hus house, 351 E 74 June 5...Major Barbara is the next production at Greenwich Mews. ...Dorothy Davies has resigned as Equity Library managing director...A Vernon Rice memorial fund has been established by off Broadway producers and Post writers. Here Comes the Clown benefit proceeds in June will go toward such scholarships.

Here Comes the Clowns at Cherry Lane won another mild recommendation from Watt, Post. Critic admitted play was one of his favorite modern dramas. Theatre Album production isn't brillant nor completely satisfactory, but enough of play's quality does emerge to make it a moving and haunting work.

Hamlet production by Shakespeare Guild Festival is straightforward, rates Beaufort, Christian Science Monitor. But critic doesn't think the performances are as striking as group's Othello.

Vaudeville

Lillian Roth, Smith & Dale, Jules Munshin, Cara. Williams, are featured in the 5th Anniversary show at Palace.

Theatre Book Comments

Under Milk Wood, Dylan Thomas' play (New Directions), was recommended by two Times critics, Atkinson, and Eberhart. Former praised it for three reasons for the originality of the form in which the play is written, for its vigorous writing and hearty characterizations, and for its notable contrast with Our Town. The latter labels it as a garish show and panarama of a day.

Theatre Record Comments

"50 Golden Years", Mercury's album of Sophie Tucker's songs, won a rave notice from Abel, Variety, who marked it down as a showmanly presentation of a show biz great.

"Rodgers and Hart", Walden album sung by Louise Carlyle and Bob Shaver, was highly praised by Wilson, Times. Critic also okayed The Boys From Syracuse album recorded by Columbia as a disc emphasizing the unique merits of Rodgers and Hart. He also enjoyed Leonard Bernstein's "New York, New York" disc of Perspective which includes tunes from On the Town, Fancy Free, Peter Pan and Wonderful Town played by pianist John Mehegan. Wilson also liked "A Touch of Rome" album of Heritage, in which the composer plays and sings his own songs.

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Green Room Department

CRITICS POLL...Variety's annual poll of the NYC drama critics picked Ben Gazarra, End as a Man, and Eva Marie Saint, A Trip to Bountiful, as the most promising performers, while Lloyd Nolan, Audrey Hepburn and Deborah Kerr were picked as the best performers. McCord, Herald Tribune, suggests that in future trade-paper polls the categories of eligible individuals should be established in advance.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS...The general carelessness in the execution of scenery for Broadway productions was condemned by letter writer Downing, Times-Drama Mailbag... Who is wittier, David Atkinson's press agent or Henry Calvin's, asks Watts, Post, after reading column gags by each...A congressional committee is currently probing Communist infiltration into the entertainment industry which will make Page One, hints Mortimer, Mirror. Evidence already published proves that a highly professional communist ring has been set up in show business to propagandize through the mediums of song, humor and drama.

PAJAMA CRITIC...Proving once again that everybody, but everybody is a critic, the anon copywriter of the Wallachs' ad covered and praised The Pajama Game. He added the fact that the garments worn in the finale are real Weldon Pajamas. His only regret is that his store cannot sell pajamas in the lobby.

COLUMN TIPS...Alfred Drake will play the lead in Kismet in England next year, reports Farrell...A deal is in the fire for Tallulah to stage and co-produce Saroyan's new play, The Girls, hears Walker.

EDIBILE AWARDS..."Georgies", the awards given annually by George Jean Nathan, are a little different than the average award. Instead of a scroll and/or plaque, the critic gives small statues beautifully carved out of solid chocolate and stuffed with nuts. The Ladies Of the Corridor won his prize for the most creditable play. Glenn Anders, The Remarkable Mr. Pennypacker, won the prize for the most expert mugging. While Jose Ferrer won for His unselfish services to the City Center's dramatic program.

INTERVIEW HI-LITES...Donald Oenslager, currently an artist in residence at the American Academy in Rome, told world wanderer Morehouse, World Telegram & Sun, that he may produce a Broadway play in the fall. And he is always ready to design sets for Broadway plays, if anyone asks him to.

EQUITY BLAMED...It is about time Equity should try to do something for the producers, because they need it a great deal more than the actors, J J Shubert writes in a letter to Actors Equity, reports McCord, Herald Tribune. In general the actors, the producer charges, are absolutely destroying to a great extent what is left of the legitimate theatre.

Pros & Cons by TMK

5% seems to be the key number in theatre these days . Equity is fighting for a 5% welfare tax, the City Council is expected to pass a 5% admission tax. Neither of these will effect the quality of future productions. But 5% less dependence on stars, and 5% more ingenuity in presenting original ideas may help the quality of future productions.

Though "Show-Trains" and "Show-Busses" show there is a demand by out-of-towners to see Broadway shows, producers are missing a large amount of business by not making tickets to out of town theatre goers who do not travel in groups easier to get. This difficulty in getting a pair of tickets keeps many a theatre fan away from NYC.

The proposed 5% tax on amusement admissions by the NY City Council has been protested against by theatre owners, producers, and unions. The bill, which will probably pass inspite of the protests, will cover theatres, operas, bowling alleys, athletic fields and sporting events. Under the 1947 NY State enabling act exempts boxing and wrestling matches, as well as admissions to events where proceeds are used for charitable or church purposes. The Federal tax on amusement admissions was cut from 20% to 10% on April 1. The new city tax would probably go into effect July 1.

Plays

Shows that closed include The Confidential Clerk, The World of Sholom Aleichem ...2 press agents plan productions for next season. Ivan Black has purchased William Gaxton's first play The Big Shot and Lew Lipton's Lady of Desire...Bernard Simon in association with Joyce Mathews, Rose Teed, John Shubert and Jack Small are planning to present Maurice Valency's The Thracian Horses. NY City Center lost $225,000 in the past year with only the Jose Ferrer directed plays showing a profit...Louisville Courier Journal Show Train brought 186 to NYC to see 6 shows..."Stars and Scenes from Shakespeare" is being exhibited at Museum of City of NY. 5th & 103.

People

Estimated NYC attendance at 27 shows, on and off Broadway, by "CD" is 167,000 for the current week...$265,000 was dispensed for needy actors and actresses during the past year, Actors Fund reports...Jack Mullaney replaces Michael Wager in The Remarkable Mr. Pennypacker May 31, Wager will make a film in Israel...The Lunts will appear on Broadway this fall in their London hit, Noel Coward's Quadrille...Cyril Ritchard will appear with Mary Martin in Peter Pan, which opens on the west coast in July.

Award Dept.

Theatre World 1953-54 "Most Promising Personalities of the Broadway Stage" include: Orson Bean, Harry Belafonte, James Dean, Joan Diener, Ben Gazarra, Carol Haney, Jonathan Lucas, Kay Medford, Scott Merrill, Elizabeth Montgomery, Leo Penn, and Eva Marie Saint.

Summer Playhouses

Tickets for Guy Lombardo's Arabian Nights which opens at Jones Beach June 24 will be sold at Rivoli Theatre box-office...Margaret Truman will tour the summer circuit in Dodie Smith's Autumn Crocus...St. John Terrell will operate Neptune Music Circus at Asbury Park this summer...The Caine Mutiny Court Martial will be presented at Central City, Colo, this summer.

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First Class Mail